



Presidential battle could play role in control of state capitols in several swing states



Pedestrians walk past the Pennsylvania Capitol in Harrisburg, Pa., Tuesday, Nov. 19, 2019.

Associated Press

By **MARK SCOLFORO and DAVID A. LIEB**

Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) —

Two swing districts in a swing county may very well decide which party controls the House in the swing state of Pennsylvania, one of several where pivotal legislative battles are playing out in the shadow of the presidential campaign.

Democrat Brian Munroe and Republican Joe Hogan were elected nearly two years ago to their seats in the suburbs

north of Philadelphia, winning by margins of 515 and 76 votes, respectively, out of more than 30,000 ballots cast.

Their races this year are among a few dozen nationally that could determine party control in state capitols and, ultimately, who sets public policy on such contentious issues as abortion, guns and transgender rights. The contests are particularly important due to recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions that have weakened federal

regulatory oversight and returned more power to states. "State legislatures will determine the rights and freedoms we have and the direction our country takes. The stakes couldn't be higher," said Daniel Squadron, co-founder of The States Project, which recently announced a \$70 million effort to aid Democratic legislative candidates in certain states.

All told, groups aligned with Democrats and Republicans are planning to pour a couple hundred million dollars

into state legislative battles. Nearly 5,800 legislative seats in 44 states are up for election this year. The top targets include a half-dozen states where control of a chamber is in play — Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Most of those states also are presidential battlegrounds. In some cases, national political groups are trying to link legislative candidates to the fortunes of President Joe Biden and former President

Donald Trump. In others, they are trying to distinguish them from the top of the ticket. Biden sought to rebound from a poor debate performance by campaigning in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. But his political problems have led some Democrats to suggest he should step aside and raised concern that down-ballot Democrats also could suffer if discouraged Democrats choose not to vote.

Continued on Page 2



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Continued from Front

On Wednesday, Democratic legislative leaders from Arizona and Wisconsin said they hope the door-to-door efforts of their statehouse candidates can have a reverse coat-tails effect, boosting Democrats at the top of the ticket.

Democrats won a slim 102-101 majority in the Pennsylvania House two years ago. But Republicans expressed confidence they can retake the chamber this year, citing inflation, immigration and Biden's troubles.

"If the election were held tomorrow, I'd feel great about it," said Pennsylvania state Rep. Josh Kail, head of the campaign efforts for Pennsylvania House Republicans. The Republican State Leadership Committee already has run ads in Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin pinning inflation on Biden and other Democrats while touting Republican legislative candidates.

Democrats are targeting Wisconsin after a new liberal majority of the state Supreme Court struck down the previous Republican-drawn districts that had entrenched the GOP in power. The new districts, backed by Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, improve Democrats' chances.

The Supreme Court's 2022 decision overturning a half-century of abortion rights showed both the influence of national politics in state elections and the importance of state legislatures. After the ruling, many Republican-led states banned or limited abortion while many Democratic-led states strengthened abortion protections. The ruling gave Democrats a new campaign theme for the 2022 legislative elections, which were the first conducted under voting districts redrawn using 2020 census data. Democrats wrested control of legislative chambers away from Republicans in Michigan, Minnesota and Pennsylvania.

This year's reelection bids by Hogan and Munroe are among 15 Pennsylvania House races spotlighted by the national Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee. Both of their Bucks County districts gave slightly more than half their votes to Biden four years ago and a larger margin to Democrats John Fetterman and Josh Shapiro in their 2022 races for U.S. Senate and governor. "We believe we have a great opportunity not just to protect our majority in the suburbs, but to grow our majority," Pennsylvania House Majority Leader Matt

Bradford said.

Democrat Anna Payne, who is challenging Hogan, sees abortion rights, public safety and school funding as the key issues. "To some extent, people are looking for common sense," Payne said. "They don't want anybody who's too extreme on one side or too extreme on the other." Hogan, a former congressional aide, has burnished a moderate image in the General Assembly, working on childhood education and public transit, among other things.

Rosemary Donahue, a 77-year-old retired nurse and registered Republican, said she has received mail from Hogan and will be evaluating his performance on such issues as fixing roads, supporting schools and women's health rights. She regularly follows state and national politics.

"If you watch television, you can't think of anything else, because you're constantly being bombarded by the presidential election, advertisements and all," Donahue said.

Arlene McBride, who recently became one of Munroe's constituents, said she'll be watching his race with Bucks County Recorder of Deeds Dan McPhillips to see who is more inclined to preserve the



State Rep. Joe Hogan, a Bucks County freshman Republican, poses in his Capitol offices on Monday, July 8, 2024, in the state Capitol in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Associated Press

social safety net. She ranks women's health, education and welcoming immigrants among her top issues.

"Do they care about others or are they strictly for business?" said McBride, 90, a registered Democrat. "It doesn't seem that those who are strictly for big business really care about the less fortunate."

Research has shown that many voters know little about their state legislative candidates, so "national politics will probably dominate the state legislative elections," said Steven Rogers, a political scientist at Saint Louis University who focuses on state legislatures.

While Republicans seek to reverse their 2022 losses, Democrats are pushing to

flip closely divided, GOP-led legislative chambers in Arizona and New Hampshire. Immigration and inflation are especially hot issues in Arizona. And abortion rights supporters recently submitted petition signatures to get a constitutional amendment on the November ballot. That has raised the stakes in a state where voter registration is divided almost equally among Republicans, independents and Democrats. "I'm expecting a lot of the national issues — the national dynamics — to really play into the legislative races in Arizona because of our battleground-state status," said James Strickland a political scientist at Arizona State University. □



President Joe Biden, right, and Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump, left, participate in a presidential debate hosted by CNN, Thursday, June 27, 2024, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

By JONATHAN MATTISE
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A federal judge has ruled that a Tennessee woman has a constitutional right to post a

yard sign with profane language condemning both President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump.

Julie Pereira set up a sign in

A city's fine for a profane yard sign about Biden and Trump was unconstitutional, judge rules

her front yard saying "F-'Em Both 2024" except, uncensored. The city of Lakeland, a northeast suburb of Memphis, then fined Pereira hundreds of dollars for violating its regulation against obscene content on signs.

She filed a lawsuit in June, saying she was so dissatisfied with both presidential candidates that she wanted a sign that "speaks simply and cogently for itself." U.S. District Judge Mark Norris in Memphis ruled Tuesday that Pereira's political sign is not obscene, and the city cannot lawfully regulate people's points of view.

"We are proud to have pro-

tected Mrs. Pereira's right to express her political views and to have achieved a successful outcome in this important First Amendment case," said Daniel Horwitz, Pereira's lead attorney.

The judge's order comes after the city agreed to a settlement paying Pereira about \$32,000 for her legal fees and reimbursing nearly \$700 in fines.

The city's regulation prohibits signs with "statements of an obscene, indecent, or immoral character which would offend public morals or decency" and "statements, words or pictures of an obscene nature."

Initially, Pereira censored

her sign as local officials demanded by covering up one letter in the profane word, but within a week she removed the redaction. The city began fining her in January, so she covered up part of the word again to avoid further penalties, according to the lawsuit. Pereira's lawsuit said "cuss" words are not constitutionally obscene. The lawsuit and the judge pointed to a 1971 Supreme Court decision that overturned the conviction of a man in California who entered a courthouse wearing a jacket with a message against the draft that included profanity. □

Las Vegas hits record of fifth consecutive day of 115 degrees or greater as heat wave scorches US

By KEN RITTER and TY ONEIL
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Las Vegas baked Wednesday in a record fifth consecutive day of temperatures sizzling at 115 degrees Fahrenheit (46.1 Celsius) or greater amid a lengthening hot spell that is expected to broil much of the U.S. into the weekend, the National Weather Service said.

The temperature climbed to 115 at 1:13 p.m. at Harry Reid International Airport, breaking the old mark of four consecutive days. On Sunday, the heat wave set Las Vegas' all-time temperature record of 120 F (48.8 C).

Even by desert standards, the prolonged baking that Nevada's largest city is experiencing is nearly unprecedented.

"This is the most extreme heat wave in the history of record-keeping in Las Vegas since 1937," said meteorologist John Adair, a veteran of three decades at the National Weather Service office in southern Nevada.

Keith Bailey and Lee Doss met early Wednesday morning at Las Vegas park to beat the heat and exercise their dogs Breakie, Ollie and Stanley.

"If I don't get out by 8:30 in the morning, then it's not going to happen that day," Bailey said, wearing a sunhat while the dogs played in the grass.

Alyse Sobosan said this July has been the hottest in the 15 years she has lived in Las Vegas. A counselor at a school that's on summer break, Sobosan said she doesn't step outside during the day if she can help it, and waits until 9 p.m. or later to walk her dogs.

"It's oppressively hot," she said. "It's like you can't really live your life."

It's also dangerously hot, health officials have emphasized. There have been at least nine heat-related deaths this year in Clark County, which encompasses Las Vegas, according to the county coroner's office. But officials say the toll is likely higher.



People cool off in misters along the Las Vegas Strip, Sunday, July 7, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

"Even people of average age who are seemingly healthy can suffer heat illness when it's so hot it's hard for your body to cool down," said Alexis Brignola, an epidemiologist at the Southern Nevada Health District.

The searing heat wave gripping large parts of the U.S. also led to record daily high temperatures in Oregon, where it is suspected to have caused eight deaths, the state medical examiner's office said. More than 142 million people around the U.S. were under heat alerts Wednesday, especially in Western states.

On the other side of the nation, the National Weather Service warned of major-to-extreme heat risk over portions of the East Coast.

An excessive heat warning remained in place Wednesday for the Philadelphia area, northern Delaware and nearly all of New Jersey. Temperatures were around 90 F (32.2 C) for most of the region, and forecasters warned the heat index could soar as high as 108 F (42.2 C). The warning was due to expire at 8 p.m. Wednesday, though forecasters said there may be a need to extend it.

Dozens of locations across the West tied or broke previous heat records over the weekend and are ex-

pected to keep doing so all week, although the end of the siege was in sight in some areas.

The heat was blamed for a motorcyclist's death over the weekend in Death Valley National Park. At Death Valley on Tuesday, tourists queued for photos in front of a giant thermometer that was reading 120 F (48.9 C). Simon Pell and Lisa Gregory from London left their air-conditioned RV to experience a midday blast of heat that would be unthinkable back home.

"I don't need a thermometer to tell me that it's hot," Pell said. "You hear about it in stories and and wildlife documentaries. But just for me, I wanted to experience what it would feel like. ... It's an incredible experience." Record highs for the date were also hit Tuesday in parts of Oregon and Washington, with Portland reaching 103 F (39.4 C) and Salem and Eugene hitting 105 F (40.5 C).

The Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office on Wednesday confirmed two new suspected heat-related deaths, bringing to eight the total number of deaths during the heat-wave. One was an 83-year-old man in Washington County and the other was a 72-year-old man in Multnomah County. Seven of the deaths were

men and one was a woman. The youngest was 33 but all of the others were age 64 and older.

The National Park Service was investigating the third hiker death in recent weeks at the Grand Canyon, where temperatures on parts of some trails can reach 120 F (49 C) in the shade. Bystanders and medical staff on Sunday unsuccessfully attempted CPR on the 50-year-old man, the park service said.

An excessive heat warning continued Wednesday in many parts of southern and central Arizona. Forecasters said the high in Phoenix was expected to reach 114 F (45.5 C) after it hit 116 F (46.6 C) on Tuesday, tying the previous record for the date set in 1958.

In Marana, Arizona, near Tucson, authorities were investigating the death of a 2-year-old girl who was left alone in a vehicle on a Tuesday afternoon where the high hit 111 F (43.8 C). Police Capt. Tim Brunenkant said the car apparently was left running and the air conditioning was functional, but it was unclear how long the girl was by herself. In Lake Havasu, Arizona, a 4-month-old baby died from heat-related complications Friday after becoming unconscious during a boating trip, the Mohave

County Sheriff's Department said. The temperature that day hit 120 F (48.8 C). The U.S. heat wave came as the global temperature in June was a record warm for the 13th straight month and marked the 12th straight month that the world was 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times, the European climate service Copernicus said. Most of this heat, trapped by human-caused climate change, is from long-term warming from greenhouse gases emitted by the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, scientists say.

In Las Vegas, hotels and casinos keep their visitors cool with massive AC units. But for homeless residents and others without access to safe environments, officials have set up emergency cooling centers at community centers across southern Nevada.

Firefighters in Henderson, Nevada, last week became the first in the region to deploy what city spokesperson Madeleine Skains called "polar pods" used to cool a person exhibiting symptoms of heat stroke or a related medical emergency. Skains said four vehicles in the city of more than 330,000 residents have the devices that are similar to units first put into use a month ago in Phoenix. They can be filled with water and ice to immerse a patient in cold water on the way to a hospital.

Extreme heat in the West has also dried out vegetation that fuels wildfires.

A new blaze in Oregon, dubbed the Larch Creek Fire, quickly grew to more than 5 square miles (12 square kilometers) Tuesday evening as flames tore through grassland in Wasco County. Evacuations were ordered for remote homes. In California, firefighters were battling least 19 wildfires Wednesday, including a 45-square-mile (117-square-kilometer) blaze that prompted evacuation orders for about 200 homes in the mountains of Santa Barbara County. □

Gunman who was killed by Yellowstone rangers had planned a July 4 mass shooting, park reveals

By MEAD GRUVER

Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — The warning from a woman in Yellowstone National Park came in just after midnight on July Fourth: She'd just been held at gunpoint by a man who said he planned to carry out a mass shooting a random attack common in the U.S. these days but not in the Yellowstone region, let alone the park itself.

Rangers spent the next several hours trying to find the gunman before he showed up outside a dining area with 200 people inside. He shot a barrage of bullets with a semi-automatic rifle at a service entrance.

The rangers including one who was wounded shot back.

Their rounds hit the attacker, Samson Lucas Bariah Fussner, 28, of Milton, Florida, who died at the scene in the busy Canyon Village tourist lodge area near the scenic Grand Canyon of Yellowstone.

The previously unreleased details provided by park officials Tuesday revealed a harrowing situation that seemingly could have ended badly and raised new



This photo provided by the National Park Service shows a sign marking the north entrance of Yellowstone National Park on May 7, 2018.

Associated Press

questions about the attacker's intent and motivations. Fussner's Facebook page showed if anything pride about landing a concession job in Yellowstone, a typically seasonal gig that often involves cooking and serving food to the park's 3 million summer visitors. Such jobs usually go to somewhat younger people in their early 20s; often they are college students who journey into

the U.S. from a variety of other countries.

Fussner posted a photo of his Xanterra Parks and Resorts badge and photos of him in snowy Yellowstone scenes from mid-May, at the onset of summer tourist season. There are no posts hinting at anger or any other motivation for the shooting. And while Yellowstone often draws headlines for sometimes deadly mishaps involv-

ing wildlife and the park's famous hot springs, shootings despite the park's millions of visitors and high rate of gun ownership in the region are exceedingly rare. No attack like this one has happened in the park in recent memory.

The wounded ranger was released from a hospital but not identified. The shooting led authorities to close off Canyon Lodge, a com-

plex of hotel rooms, cabins and dining facilities, until Wednesday.

The facilities are run by Xanterra Parks and Resorts, the main concessionaire for such facilities in Yellowstone. Soon after midnight July 4, law enforcement rangers heard that Fussner had held a woman against her will with a gun at a residence in Canyon Village, a lodging and dining area. The woman reported that Fussner threatened to kill her and others, including carrying out a mass shooting at Independence Day events outside the park, park officials said in a statement Tuesday.

Rangers found Fussner's vehicle but not him. More than 20 law enforcement rangers, including a park special response team, looked for Fussner while organizing to protect park visitors and employees. Around 8 a.m. Thursday, law enforcement rangers encountered Fussner as he approached and fired on a service entrance to the Canyon Lodge dining facility. Several of the rangers shot at him, and he died at the scene, according to the statement. □

NYPD nixing 'Courtesy, Professionalism, Respect' slogan on new patrol cars for crime-focused motto

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Police Department will stop promoting "Courtesy,

Professionalism, Respect" on the exterior of its patrol cars, dropping the three-word motto decades after it was adopted to repair

fraying community relations.

Instead, the department is now outfitting all of its new patrol vehicles with a decal that reads: "Fighting Crime, Protecting The Public."

A police spokesperson said the long-standing "CPR" slogan will be phased out as the department updates its vehicle fleet, with the new crime-focused messaging eventually decorating the rear windows of some 10,000 patrol cars. The spokesperson did not elaborate on what accounted for the change, which was first reported by Gothamist.

The "Courtesy, Professionalism, Respect" tagline first appeared on the side of patrol cars in 1996, in

stacked and italicized red-and-white font, as part of a public relations and training campaign launched under Mayor Rudy Giuliani. The effort included sting operations to weed out rude officers and televised public service announcements touting the department's commitment to a friendlier, less hostile police force. One department poster at the time reportedly read: "Everybody in New York; Black, White, Yellow or Blue Could Use a Little C.P.R." While the effort was applauded by some New Yorkers, the motto was also widely mocked and repurposed by police critics. After a white NYPD officer was charged with sodomizing a Black man, Abner Louima,

inside a Brooklyn precinct station in 1997, protesters carried signs describing the police as "Criminals, Perverts, Racists."

The new slogan comes after the department announced last year that it would be updating its classic blue-and-white cruisers for the first time in decades. The exteriors of the new vehicles feature the green-and-white striped NYPD flag and a QR code enabling people to send performance ratings to the department.

Some of the new cars also include a different decal "Protecting NYC since 1845" that was unveiled by the previous NYPD commissioner, Keechant Sewell. □



Pedestrians pass in front of a New York Police Department patrol car as they cross Greenwich Street, Wednesday, July 10, 2024, in New York.

Associated Press

Man suspected of killing the family of BBC radio commentator has been found, British police say

By PAN PYLAS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police said they found Wednesday the man suspected of killing the wife and two daughters of a well-known BBC radio commentator near London in a brutal crossbow attack. In a statement, Hertfordshire Police said 26-year-old Kyle Clifford was found in the Enfield area of north London, near his home, and that he is receiving medical treatment for his injuries. Police did not say how those injuries happened but stressed that they had not fired any shots. The BBC confirmed that the women killed were members of the family of its commentator John Hunt his 61-year-old wife Carol Hunt and their daughters Hannah, 28, and Louise, 25. Footage from Sky News showed the suspect being carried on a stretcher out of Lavender Hill Cemetery in Enfield, which is close to his home and around 52 kilometers (17 miles) to the east from the site of the kill-



Chief Superintendent Jon Simpson of Hertfordshire Police speaks to media outside Hatfield Police Station after an incident in Bushey on Tuesday evening, in Hertfordshire, England, Wednesday, July 10, 2024.

ings. Armed police officers, forensic personnel and ambulance staff had massed around the cemetery through the day. The public had been urged not to approach Clifford, who the BBC reported had been in the British Army for

a brief period of service in 2022. "Following extensive inquiries, the suspect has been located and nobody else is being sought in connection with the investigation at this time," said Detective Inspector Justine Jen-

kins from the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Major Crime Unit. "This continues to be an incredibly difficult time for the victims' family and we would ask that their privacy is respected as they come to terms with what has hap-

pened," she added. Jenkins said the investigation is moving "at pace" and that formal identification of the victims is yet to take place. She also said that the "premature" naming of the victims "caused great upset." Police had been scouring a park in north London, near the home of Clifford, after being alerted Tuesday about the killings in a house in Bushey, a residential area in northwestern London. Police and ambulance crews tried to save them, but they were pronounced dead at the scene. John Hunt is the main racing commentator for BBC 5 Live, the corporation's main news and sports radio channel. His voice is known to millions through his coverage of the world famous Grand National and The Derby. A colleague of Hunt's and BBC 5 Live's lead presenter Mark Chapman struggled to hold back the tears as he expressed everyone's shock and pain. □

Associated Press

Iraqi court sentences wife of slain Islamic State leader to death for crimes against Yazidi women

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
Associated Press

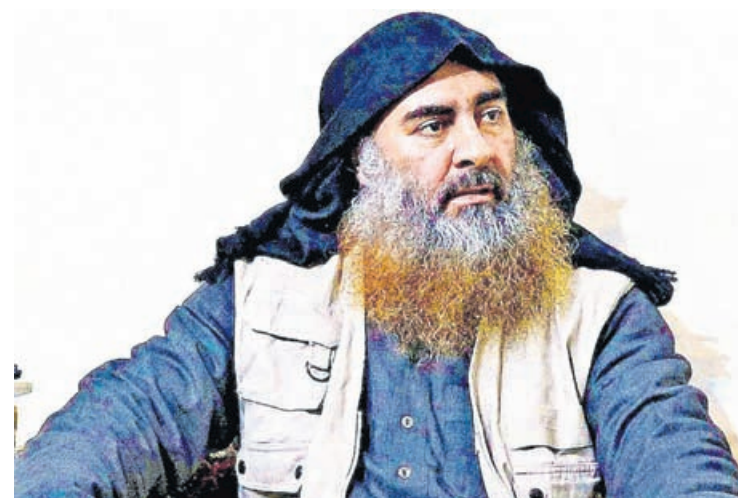
BAGHDAD (AP) — An Iraqi court issued a death sentence against one of the wives of the late brutal Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, alleging that she was complicit in crimes committed against Yazidi women captured by the militant group, the country's judiciary announced Wednesday. The ruling comes weeks before the 10-year mark since IS launched a series of attacks against the Yazidi religious minority in the northern Iraqi region of Sinjar in early August 2014, killing and capturing thousands including women and girls who were subjected to human trafficking and sexual abuse. The United Nations said the campaign against the Yazidis amounted to

genocide. A statement by Iraq's judicial council said the Karkh Criminal Court sentenced the woman for "detaining Yazidi women in her home" and facilitating their kidnapping by "the terrorist (Islamic State group) gangs in Sinjar district." It also said the ruling was issued in accordance with Iraq's anti-terrorism law and its "Yazidi survivors law." The statement did not name the defendant, but two court officials identified her as Asma Mohammed, who was arrested in 2018 in Turkey and later extradited. A senior Iraqi security official told The Associated Press that another wife of al-Baghdadi and his daughter, who were also extradited from Turkey to Iraq, had been sentenced to life in prison.

The sentences were handed down a week ago but were announced by the judicial council Wednesday, he said. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the case publicly. Survivors of the IS attacks in Iraq have complained of a lack of accountability and have criticized the decision made at the request of the Iraqi government to wind down a U.N. probe into IS crimes, including the alleged use of chemical weapons. At the same time, human rights groups have raised concerns about the lack of due process in trials of alleged IS members in Iraq and have particularly criticized mass executions of those convicted on terror-

ism charges. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have said the confessions are often extracted under torture and urged Iraq to abolish the death penalty.

On June 29, 2014, al-Baghdadi, known as one of the most ruthlessly effective jihadist leaders of modern times, declared the militant group's caliphate in large swaths of Iraq and Syria. □



This file image released by the Department of Defense on Wednesday, Oct. 30, 2019, and displayed at a Pentagon briefing, shows an image of Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Associated Press

Dozens of people are sentenced to life in prison in the UAE in a mass trial criticized abroad

By JON GAMBRELL

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) —

A mass trial of dissidents in the United Arab Emirates sentenced 43 people to life in prison on Wednesday while several other defendants received long prison terms in a case that has been widely criticized by activists abroad.

The sentences given by the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal came in a case described by the UAE government as involving the Muslim Brotherhood, a pan-Islamic organization declared a terrorist group by the Emirates. Activists, however, decried the case as targeting dissidents, something that drew attention and protests at the United Nations COP28 climate talks held in Dubai in November.

The state-run WAM news agency reported the verdicts after human rights activists said the sentences had been handed down. Five defendants received 15-year sentences while five others received 10-year sentences. Another 24 defendants had their cases dismissed, WAM reported.



Activists hold signs during a demonstration for Egypt's jailed leading pro-democracy activist Alaa Abdel-Fattah and Mohamed al-Siddiq, jailed activist, at the COP28 U.N. Climate Summit, Saturday, Dec. 9, 2023, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Associated Press

The court ruled that those convicted "have worked to create and replicate violent events in the country, similar to what has occurred in other Arab states including protests and clashes between the security forces and protesting crowds that led to deaths and injuries and to the destruction of facilities, as well as the consequent spread of panic and terror among people," WAM said.

The agency reported on no specific evidence the court cited tying those convicted to violence or the Brotherhood.

The verdict, which can be appealed to the UAE's Federal Supreme Court, drew immediate criticism abroad.

"These over-the-top long sentences make a mockery of justice and are another nail in the coffin for the UAE's nascent civil society," said

Joey Shea, a researcher focusing on the UAE for Human Rights Watch. "The UAE has dragged scores of its most dedicated human rights defenders and civil society members through a shamelessly unfair trial riddled with due process violations and torture allegations."

The Emirates Detainees Advocacy Center, an advocacy group in exile, separately reported that sentences had

been handed down. "Regrettably, these sentences were entirely foreseeable," center director Mohamed al-Zaabi said. "From the outset, it was clear that this trial was merely a facade designed to perpetuate the detention of prisoners of conscience even after their sentences had been served."

Amnesty International also criticized the sentences, saying the defendants had "been held in prolonged solitary confinement, deprived of contact with their families and lawyers and subjected to sleep deprivation through continuous exposure to loud music." Those tried also were "forbidden from receiving the most basic court documents," it said.

"The trial has been a shameless parody of justice and violated multiple fundamental principles of law, including the principle that you cannot try the same person twice for the same crime, and the principle that you cannot punish people retroactively under laws that didn't exist at the time of the alleged offense," said Devin Kenney, an Amnesty International researcher. □

Armed bandits interrupt a rescue of migrants in the Mediterranean off Libya, an aid group says

ROME (AP) — An aid group that rescues migrants in the Mediterranean says one of its missions was interrupted by armed bandits who boarded the overloaded smugglers' boat and sped away with it after the migrants threw themselves into the sea. SOS Mediterranee filmed the incident Tuesday. The group said it occurred about 46 nautical miles north of Zuwara on Libya's western coast, a frequent launching point for smuggling operations to bring migrants to Europe.

According to the video, SOS Mediterranee volunteers were helping transfer the 93 passengers from the wooden boat onto their rescue vessel when two rubber dinghies approached.

A masked bandit leapt onto the migrant boat, sparking

panic among the remaining passengers, who threw themselves into the sea. The bandit took control of the empty boat and steered it away from the scene as

the SOS Mediterranee crew plucked people from the sea.

It wasn't clear if the bandits were trying to recover the boat for future smuggling



Rescue personnel of the SOS Mediterranee's volunteers, right, help transfer the passengers from a wooden migrant boat onto their own rescue vessel in the Mediterranean Sea as a masked person seen left, leapt onto the migrant boat as he approached them using a rubber dinghy, left, on Tuesday, July 9, 2024.

Associated Press

operations. Often, when Italian maritime authorities encounter such boats, they intentionally sink them as a matter of maritime safety. But Valeria Taurino, general director of SOS Mediterranee, said governments are providing fewer resources to rescue operations, leaving aid groups to do the job in increasingly dangerous situations.

"The lack of rescue vessels left by the states in recent years in the central Mediterranean has generated a reckless increase in armed presence and illegal and dangerous actions for both the fleeing shipwrecked people and aid workers," she said in a statement.

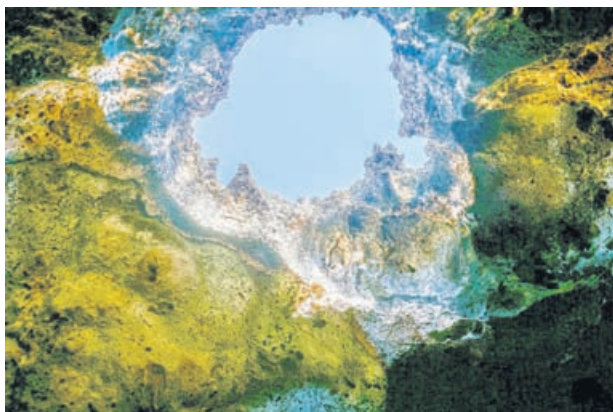
Italian authorities say the presence of humanitarian rescue ships in the Mediterranean only encourages mi-

grants to take the risky voyages, a charge they deny. The rescue was one of several reported by rescue groups this week, as smugglers appear to be taking advantage of summer's often calm seas. That said, the number of migrants arriving in Italy this year by boat 27,744 is less than half the 72,036 who had arrived by this time last year, according to interior ministry statistics. The right-wing government of Premier Giorgia Meloni has made limiting migration a priority. It has signed deals with individual African countries to block departures, imposed limits on the work of humanitarian rescue ships, cracked down on traffickers who reach Italy and taken other measures to deter would-be migrants from setting off. □

Today is going to be a good day

(Oranjestad)—Here's why: Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.

Nature Calls



The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whiptail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center. For more information, visit the website www.arubanationalpark.org

Philip's Animal Garden



To stay with the animals, let's hop to an amazing place. Something different to do, an experience that is to be enjoyed by people of all ages. Welcome to Philip's Animal Garden. We are not talking about a zoo here, this is actually a sanctuary for all types of creatures, from

horses to peacocks, kangaroos to turtles, monkeys, goats, and many, many more different species. The place was founded in 2009 and it is the only organization rescuing and rehabilitating exotic animals in Aruba, which has resulted in an amazing collection of these animals. They provide a suitable living environment for all the rescued animals. Up until now the owner, Philip, has built this shelter with his own efforts; building all the cages from scratch, designing all structures and welding them with his own bare hands. His goal is to upgrade the facilities to a world-class animal shelter with veterinary care and round-the-clock staffs. With the input from the Aruban community and visitors they provide the best care for these animals. Please check out their website for more information: www.philipsanimalgarden.com.

The Lighthouse



No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September 2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name 'California' came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called 'California' that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern tip to ships with its light. www.arubalighthouse.com will give you more information.

Kayak in the Mangroves



Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you

are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some workout -as it might get a little windy and rough-, you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. Its fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. There are several companies that offer kayak tours, we had good experience with The Shack Kayak Tours Aruba, find them on Facebook.

Take an "off-road" sightseeing tour



A must-do activity on the island is for sure taking an off-road sightseeing tour. If you have a rented car, you can drive through the north-eastern side of Aruba and explore the natural pools, caves, rock formations and gorgeous view of the Atlantic Ocean. To access most of these sights, like the natural pool (Conchi) and the Guadirikiri and Fontein caves, you must enter through the Arikok National Park and buy a day pass. Then you drive up the rugged road that leads you through the white dunes, caves and along the wind turbines. Other locations, like the Ayo and Casibari Rock formation are situated more in the center of the island, and are free for guests, 24 hours a day.

Go for a shopping spree in the city center



Need a new bathing suit? Head to the city center of Oranjestad, where there is countless of different stores—both high end and more affordable—that can offer you the service you deserve! Local shopping stores often offer a more affordable price, and have a variety of clothes, shoes, bathing suites, purses and more. Along the Royal Plaza strip, there are numerous jewelry stores with great quality jewelry. In the Renaissance mall, you can shop high-end luxury brands, like Dolce & Gabbana, Kate Spade, Louis Vuitton and more.

Around the high-rise hotel area near Palm Beach, the Paseo Herencia Mall contain a variety of shopping stores, restaurants, small food stands and even a movie theater! □

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Experience the modern twist of tradition at L'Avenue Belgian Bistro Aruba!



(Oranjestad)—Nuzzled up in a cozy nook of The Cove Mall in the sun-kissed paradise of Palm Beach, L'Avenue takes you on a journey to experience the true flavors of Belgium. Offering a selection of traditional Belgian and French cuisine, this bistro brings the old into the new against a backdrop of laid-back luxury.

The new kid on the block, L'Avenue currently holds a unique position in the island's culinary

scene; being the only Belgian-owned, Belgian restaurant on the island. This winning hand is not obtained by many, and L'Avenue's delicious menu and wide selection of Belgian beer, and European and New World wine emphasizes the bistro's unique vision to bring Europe into the palm of your hands!

Once part of the famous Taste of Belgium restaurant, L'Avenue offers a new point of view and brings a fresh life to what was once beloved by both locals and tourists. Crafted by Chef Juan Ludeña and his team, enjoy a superb variety of classic Belgian and French dishes served with a touch of innovation for lunch and dinner, including stews, steak-house quality meat and their famous Moules-frites, served with a variety of delicious and rich broth.



As if that wasn't enough, enjoy your meal under warm, stary lights accompanied by live music performances every day, seated either in a relaxing and cool interior area of the restaurant, or outside against a backdrop of the bright, colorful lights of the Palm Beach strip!

More information

L'Avenue is situated at The Cove Mall in Palm Beach and is open every day from 11am to 10pm for lunch and dinner. To book a reservation or ask for more information, please contact their phone line at +297 6996400, send an e-mail info@lavenuearuba.com, or visit their website at lavenuearuba.com



Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Candelchi!

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Candelchi" (Squirrelfish), a common, yet shy fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba.

Let's talk about the names of fish.



Do you know your fish? The Department of Department of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, known as Santa Rosa, offers this informative article that illustrate some fish and their names in Papiamentu.

Candelchi, Squirrelfish, Holocentrus adscensionis:

Candelchi actually refers to the entire squirrelfish family or, as some say, when we say candelchi, we mean several different species but without distinguishing them by species. In this picture, we are showing the most common one in our waters, which is called squirrelfish in English or scientifically known as *Holocentrus adscensionis*.

Under candelchi, we in Aruba generally refer to all the different species of squirrelfish. They all look alike and it's really difficult to distinguish between them.

The squirrelfish family is distinguished by the following characteristics. They are heart-shaped with pink or red hues and often show heart-shaped streaks between the scales along the body. They have hard fins and are always armed. Over at our sister island Curaçao, they are called "bari di clabo" (nail barrel) for that reason.

In our waters, there are 7 to 8 types or species present and they

are sometimes caught and seen occasionally. They can be distinguished by different marks such as color on the dorsal spine or marks on the body.

In Aruba:

Candelchi are found on reefs or areas with structure in the water where they can hide. Although they prefer to hunt for food at night, they are also active during the day. They are edible and delicious when prepared dry and crispy with lime. It is particularly challenging to scale the fish, which is why it is not one of the favorites among fishermen. They often live in groups. □

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Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use



(Oranjestad)—Though western medicine is now widely used for common illnesses and to keep our bodies healthy and happy, it is still very common in every household in Aruba (and around the world) to have staple home remedies that is passed on through generations. Here are some tips that our elders have passed on to us over the years.

Pineapple

Pineapple has more uses than topping it on your Christmas ham. According to elders, the skin of a pineapple is great to use to refresh your body. Clean the skin thoroughly and make tea or warapa* with it. It is said that this tea can also be drank after an operation on the ovaries or uterus. This gets rid of irritation and inflammation.

When the fruit is unripe and green, this can be used to stimulate menstruation flow in women. This also stimulates the passing kidney stones. When ripe, the fruit can be used for poisoning in the gut and can help treat rheumatic

diseases, like arthritis.

However, breastfeeding women who cannot produce much milk are advised not to consume too pineapple, and people with acid reflux are recommended to not consume any pineapple at all.

Arrowroot

Arrowroot is native to tropical America and can be sold as a powder or whole. It is said that you can take arrowroot powder and make a "shalup" (porridge) for stomach pain or when you're feeling weak. You can make it with milk too, but it is advised to best use just water. You can also add prunes for a bit of sweetness. Arrowroot shalup is also good to treat an unhealthy gut or for diarrhea.

To make arrowroot shalup, boil a bit of water and add one tablespoon of arrowroot powder and stir continuously until you reach porridge consistency. If you make a shalup with milk, add a pinch of salt. Raw arrowroot powder can be used to powder babies.

Eggplant/Aubergine

Eggplants, or aubergines, are easy to find in supermarkets around the world and can be grown all year round on the island. Related to potato and tomato, eggplants are good to calm nerves. It can also be used to lower blood pressure, by steeping its leaves in boiled water and drinking it. You can also make eggplant juice to help purify your blood. However, do make sure to drink slowly; let it mix with your spit and then swallow.



Eggplant kataplan* can also be used to treat skin tumors, abscesses and hemorrhoids. Eggplant kataplan can also be used externally to treat arthritis.

*warapa: term referring to a water and sugar solution, a.k.a simple syrup.

*kataplan: porridge-like mixture used externally for wounds or parts of the body that are painful or swollen.

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Snakes you may encounter on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—If you have ever or will ever go off-roading on the island, you may encounter three types of snakes that are dominant on the island. The Cascabel, Santanero and Boa differ from each other in a couple ways, and local perspective on each one may help you understand what you need to do if you ever were to encounter one during your touring session on the island.

Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. In fact, it's the only venomous snake native to the island. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it, as it could not only be dangerous, but this snake is also endemic to the island, and its preservation has become a legal mandate for all residents and visitors.

Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island



mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it is now being promoted as a national symbol. Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.

Santanero

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is a small fella, typically less than 50 cm long. This snake

is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings. Native as well to the island, this snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans, but can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please do not harm this species.

Boa (*Boa constrictor*)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. New-born Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous but are what is called constrictor snakes; they kill by wrapping themselves around a prey and suffocating them. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white

leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly.

Boas are a non-native species and are invasive to the island, risking the population of native lizards and birds. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. If you ever encounter a Boa, please do not approach it. Instead, please call the Arikok National Park, as they are experienced in handling Boas. □



In celebrating 200 years of Oranjestad... Learn about the history of the famous town hall!

(Oranjestad)—If you've ever taken a stroll through main street Oranjestad, you may have stumbled upon a big green house with beautiful colonial design. This legendary house, now used as a town hall for civil marriages, was once owned by a wealthy doctor and formed part of the elite neighborhood in Oranjestad.



Jacobo Eloy Arends was an Aruban physician, and in lived in Oranjestad during the 1920s. In 1922, he married Maria Monica Lacle, the daughter of well-known business man at the time, Adrian Lacle. The two lived a posh life in the city center, and their mansion—once the center for neighborhood parties—now serves as a public town hall for civil marriages and is a cultural monument on the island.

The house was designed

by architect Chibi Wever, and constructed under the leadership of famous master carpenter, Dada Picus, who was famous at the time for his construction of beautiful buildings.

The construction of the house started once Jacobo and Maria got engaged. It is said that during the time of construction, Maria was not allowed to see the building nor be anywhere near the construction site. It wasn't until after her honeymoon that she saw the completed

mansion for the first time, furnished entirely by her sisters-in-law.

The mansion also contained the doctor's office, as well as a pharmacy. After the death of Jacobo, the house was inherited by his son, an Aruban dentist, who converted Jacobo's office into his own dental practice. Over the years, the house was rented and used by third parties, but eventually fell into disrepair, as the maintenance cost became too high to cover.

The land was sold to Land Aruba in 1986, but it did not see a renovation until 1997. Nowadays, it serves to host weddings, and is attached to a modern building situated behind—the Aruban census office.

Jacobo and Maria's mansion was situated in front of another famous mansion, owned



by Jacobo's brother Frederico Maximiliaan (Machi) Arends. Frederico was married to Veneranda (whom the mansion was named after). Their house was also constructed by Dada Picus, utilizing Veneranda's design vision that was inspired by a house she saw in Cartagena, Colombia.

Nowadays, this mansion lies

in ruins. However, the Aruban government recently announced its official restoration, with plans to convert this monument into a governmental office and public space for visitors of Oranjestad.

Source and pictures credited to: "De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers. □



Visit the historic museum at Fort Zoutman!

(Oranjestad)—Located in the middle of downtown Oranjestad, situated right next to the government building "Cocolishi", is one of the oldest buildings of Aruba: Fort Zoutman. First constructed in 1796, this site has been used (or left unused) in many ways and have survived eras of war and attempted dismantling.

When anyone refers to Fort Zoutman, they are actually referring to two sepa-

rate buildings that, over the years, have been merged: the fort and the tower. That's right, the iconic 5-story, squared tower was not part of the original structure of the fort, and is actually called "Willem III Toren". Constructed in 1867, this tower was named after the then-reigning king of The Netherlands, Willem III. Willem III Toren was originally a light tower, but after a request from Lieutenant Governor Jan Helenus in 1866, it also became a bell tower.

The fort itself was originally constructed to protect the commerce bay of Paardenbaai from pirates and other disreputable characters roaming the Caribbean Sea. Unlike the Willem III Toren, Fort Zoutman had a more tumultuous past, including the on-and-off reception of unwanted members of the English military several times (The Netherlands was at constant war with England back in the colonial era). Over the years, both the

fort and the tower had functioned as different government center points, including a tax and stamps office. For some time these two buildings also housed a police precinct and jail, and even experienced abandonment until the Cultural Center Aruba Foundation (CCA) petitioned for its renovation in 1964, turning the site into the Historic Museum it currently is.

Despite its small size, The Historic Museum guards a rich depository of the com-

mercial, military and social history of Oranjestad, offering a glance into how the social culture of the town came to be. If you are interested in history and want to learn more about Aruba, then Fort Zoutman should definitely be included into your itinerary.

The museum is open Monday to Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-2pm. □

Source: The Old Fort of Aruba by Jan Hartog.

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Reading aids
- 6 Fleet-based
- 11 Figure of speech
- 12 Corundum, for one
- 13 Polynesian nation
- 14 Garden pests
- 15 Fin type
- 17 Constant complainer
- 19 Quaker's pronoun
- 20 Bowler, e.g.
- 23 Slow tempo
- 25 Skin opening
- 26 Quadrennial event
- 28 Pub pints
- 29 Gift
- 30 Capt.'s subordinates
- 31 Turkish topper
- 32 Methane, e.g.
- 33 Movies
- 35 Deck extra
- 38 Eastern monks
- 41 "Hello" singer
- 42 Deceive
- 43 Natural gifts

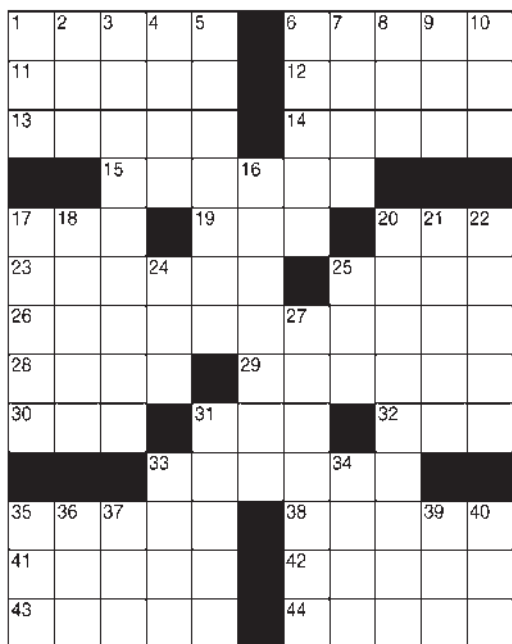
- 44 Car of the '50s

DOWN

- 1 Set afire
- 2 Bustle
- 3 Manipulation of a sort
- 4 Possum of the comics
- 5 Candy in a multi-colored roll
- 6 "Forget it!"
- 7 Skating jump
- 8 Be a contender
- 9 Throw in
- 10 Trumpeter Elgart
- 16 Abbreviate
- 17 Said with a twang
- 18 Minor no more
- 20 Half of a team's schedule
- 21 Concert spot
- 22 Midterms, e.g.
- 24 Baseball team VIPs
- 25 Bud
- 27 Long-horned grazer
- 31 Cans
- 33 Ireland native
- 34 Hotel worker
- 35 Boxing poke
- 36 Exalted work
- 37 Film-maker Burns
- 39 Ended a fast
- 40 Musical note



Yesterday's answer



4-18

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-18

CRYPTOQUOTE

UFV JNKZUX YUXLK QVUX UFV
LCDLVNLMYL, GMZ UFV
LCDLVNLMYL YUXLK QVUX
UFV QUONKWM LKK.

— KGYWG IFNAVR

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: DO NOT IMPOSE ON OTHERS WHAT YOU YOURSELF DO NOT DESIRE. — CONFUCIUS

Cruise ship Schedule: July 01 - July 30 2024

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
THU	04	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	09	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS	08.00	20.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1
WED	10	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	09.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	16	CARNIVAL CELEBRATION	08.00	22.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL VISTA	13.00	23.00	I	1
WED	17	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	C	1
TUE	23	CARNIVAL HORIZON	09.00	22.00	C	1
TUE	30	CELEBRITY BEYOND	08.00	21.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Electrical power



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours



Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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In this image from video provided by NASA, astronauts Suni Williams, left, and Butch Wilmore give a news conference aboard the International Space Station on Wednesday, July 10, 2024.

Associated Press

Astronauts confident Boeing space capsule can safely return them to Earth, despite failures

By **MARCIA DUNN**
AP Aerospace Writer
CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

(AP) — Two astronauts who should have been back on Earth weeks ago said Wednesday that they're confident that Boeing's space capsule can return them safely, despite a string of vexing breakdowns.

NASA test pilots Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams launched aboard Boeing's new Starliner capsule early last month, the first people to ride it. Helium leaks and thruster failures almost derailed their arrival at the International Space Station, and have kept them there much longer than planned. Now the earli-

est they could return may be the end of July, officials said. In their first news conference from orbit, the pair said they expect to return once thruster testing is complete here on Earth. They said they're not complaining about getting extra time in orbit, and are enjoying helping the station crew. □

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Samsung brings tech's latest fashion to wearable technology with AI twists in new watch and ring

By **MICHAEL LIEDTKE**

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Samsung is dressing up its wearable devices in technology's latest fashion: artificial intelligence.

The South Korean electronics giant on Wednesday revealed that both its first-ever premium smartwatch and a smart ring heralding its entry into a niche market will include AI features that are supposed to help people monitor and manage their health.

Both the Galaxy Watch Ultra, priced at \$650, and the Galaxy Ring, priced at \$400, are extensions of a push that Samsung launched six months ago when it introduced its first smartphones to feature AI technology as a main attraction. The high-end smartwatch costs twice as much as Samsung's latest standard model, the Galaxy Watch 7, which will sell for \$300. Tethering AI to people's essential devices has become an accelerating trend. The technology already has been implanted on smartphones made by Google and Apple that compete against Samsung and also on the latest personal computers powered



Samsung Galaxy Watch Ultra is displayed during a media preview at Samsung Galaxy Experience space, Tuesday, July 9, 2024, in New York.

by Microsoft's Windows software.

The AI deployment on Samsung's new premium watch and ring is narrowly focused on improving and maintaining personal health the main reason most people buy wearable technology. Both Samsung's watch and ring are leaning on AI to do a better job of analyzing biometric data collected from the person wearing the devices to customize

assessments of their well-being through an "energy score" that will deliver ratings on a one to 100 scale and also make recommendations like a virtual fitness coach.

Just as Apple plans to do with its AI services, Samsung's new wearable products will collect most sensitive information on the devices themselves. But some data will still be processed through remote computing

centers with a "defense-grade, multi-layer security platform" that Samsung likens to a virtual Fort Knox, echoing Apple's pledge to corral any personal information that must be processed off a device in a digital fortress. But those promises don't necessarily guarantee there won't ever be security breaches or other breakdowns that unintentionally exposes personal information to out-

siders. Samsung's premium phone is the more sophisticated of its latest wearable devices, capable of performing some functions such as flagging sleep apnea that the Galaxy Ring can't. However, the ring requires less frequent recharging, equipped with a battery that can last six to seven days before needing to be replenished.

But the smartwatch is also in a much more crowded market currently led by Apple, which has been intensifying its focus on health features since entering the market a decade ago. More than 60 million people already use the Samsung Health app that works in tandem with its smartwatches.

The health benefits associated with wearable technology have helped spur more people to buy smartwatches, with worldwide sales of the devices expected to approach about \$29 billion this year, based on a forecast by the research firm Gartner Inc. That translates to roughly 164 million new smartwatches being worn on wrists this year, with Gartner predicting the annual sales volume sold will rise to 195 million in 2028. □

Associated Press

Microsoft quits OpenAI board seat as antitrust scrutiny of artificial intelligence pacts intensifies

By **KELVIN CHAN**

AP Business Writer

Microsoft has relinquished its seat on the board of

OpenAI, saying its participation is no longer needed because the ChatGPT maker has improved its

governance since being roiled by boardroom chaos last year.

In a Tuesday letter, Microsoft confirmed it was resigning, "effective immediately," from its role as an observer on the artificial intelligence company's board. "We appreciate the support shown by OpenAI leadership and the OpenAI board as we made this decision," the letter said.

The surprise departure comes amid intensifying scrutiny from antitrust regulators of the powerful AI partnership. Microsoft has reportedly invested \$13 billion in OpenAI.

European Union regulators said last month that they

would take a fresh look at the partnership under the 27-nation bloc's antitrust rules, while the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and Britain's competition watchdog have also been examining the pact.

Microsoft took the board seat following a power struggle in which OpenAI CEO Sam Altman was fired, then quickly reinstated, while the board members behind the ouster were pushed out.

"Over the past eight months we have witnessed significant progress by the newly formed board and are confident in the company's direction," Microsoft said in its letter. "Given all

of this we no longer believe our limited role as an observer is necessary."

With Microsoft's departure, OpenAI will no longer have observer seats on its board. "We are grateful to Microsoft for voicing confidence in the Board and the direction of the company, and we look forward to continuing our successful partnership," OpenAI said in a statement. It's not hard to conclude that Microsoft's decision to ditch the board seat was heavily influenced by rising scrutiny of big technology companies and their links with AI startups, said Alex Haffner, a competition partner at U.K. law firm Fladgate. □



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, left, appears onstage with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella at OpenAI's first developer conference, on Nov. 6, 2023, in San Francisco.

Associated Press

Lorenzo Musetti reaches his first Grand Slam semifinal at Wimbledon and will face Novak Djokovic

By HOWARD FENDRICH
AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — Lorenzo Musetti threw his head back and spread his arms wide to celebrate reaching his first Grand Slam semifinal at Wimbledon, then covered his face with both hands.

His 3-6, 7-6 (5), 6-2, 3-6, 6-1 victory over Taylor Fritz on Wednesday was a big deal, to be sure. After all, the 25th-seeded Musetti, a 22-year-old from Italy, never had made it past the third round at the All England Club or past the fourth round at any major tournament until this fortnight.

"He probably knows, better than me, the surface and the stadium, for sure," Musetti said with a chuckle, aware he'll be making his Centre Court debut on Friday. "Jokes apart, he's a legend everywhere, but especially here in Wimbledon."

This will be Djokovic's record-tying 13th semifinal at Wimbledon alone, equaling Roger Federer and 49th Slam semifinal overall, extending a mark he already held. As Musetti pursues his first major championship, Djokovic seeks a 25th, including what would be an eighth at the All England Club. Djokovic's smooth trip through this year's back-



Lorenzo Musetti of Italy celebrates after defeating Taylor Fritz of the United States in their quarterfinal match at the Wimbledon tennis championships in London, Wednesday, July 10, 2024.

Associated Press

et was made even easier when the man he was supposed to play in the quarterfinals Wednesday, Alex de Minaur, pulled out with a hip injury hours before their match was scheduled to begin.

Musetti was forced to work for his spot in the final four: His 3 1/2-hour victory over the 13th-seeded Fritz was the 37th five-setter at the All England Club this year, the most at any Grand Slam tournament.

Musetti acknowledged he didn't get off to an ideal start, in part because of

nerves. But an early break in the second set helped alter the course of the evening. "Immediately, I changed my mind. I changed my attitude," he said. "And that probably made the difference."

Musetti's son, Ludovico, was born in March, and he said Wednesday that helped him rededicate himself to his sport and strive to no longer "throw away matches."

"Instead of me teaching him, he's teaching me. ... Having a child makes you reflect a lot," Musetti said.

"I feel more mature on the court, more mature off the court, and more mature as a player, as a father, as a person."

Playing at a sun-swathed No. 1 Court against Fritz, an American who is one of the sport's biggest servers but fell to 0-4 in major quarterfinals, Musetti managed to accumulate 13 break points and convert six.

With Queen Camilla, the wife of King Charles III, in the stands and joining fans in doing the wave, Musetti did far more to vary his strokes a drop shot here,

a lob there, plenty of slices than Fritz did.

"I just felt like it took a lot to finish the point," Fritz said.

Djokovic had knee surgery less than a month before the start of play at the All England Club. But despite limitations on his movement, the 37-year-old Djokovic has dropped only two sets so far facing a qualifier in the first round, a wild-card entrant in the second and only one seeded player, No. 15 Holger Rune.

Instead of going up against No. 9 de Minaur on Wednesday, Djokovic will get three full days off before meeting Musetti. The other semifinal Friday is defending champion Carlos Alcaraz against Daniil Medvedev.

Djokovic and Musetti have played each other six times previously. Djokovic has won five of those, including a five-setter at this year's French Open that concluded after 3 a.m.

It was in Djokovic's following match in Paris that he tore the meniscus in his right knee.

"We know each other pretty well. They've always been a huge fight so I expect a big, big fight. It's going to be one of the toughest challenges on tour," Musetti said, "but I am an ambitious guy and I like to be challenged." □

Former Browns QB great Bernie Kosar reveals health challenges

CLEVELAND (AP) — Former Cleveland Browns star quarterback Bernie Kosar has been diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver and Parkinson's disease, according to a story in Cleveland Magazine.

The 60-year-old former player is on the list for a liver transplant, though University Hospitals hepatologist Anthony Post told the magazine that Kosar has improved since the year started. At the same time, he warned that liver disease can fluctuate.

Another doctor, Cleveland Clinic chief wellness officer Michael Roizen, told the

magazine there is a more than 90% chance Kosar will need a new liver.

Kosar said he was also diagnosed with Parkinson's by an independent NFL doctor in February.

The Youngstown, Ohio, native recalled being bothered by liver-related issues for years but brushed them off because he wasn't sure of the source. A diagnosis of cirrhosis about 16 months ago confirmed the specificity and severity of his condition.

"My body gave out on me," Kosar told the magazine, recalling an episode last December while attend-

ing a Browns home game against the New York Jets. "I really felt like I wasn't going to make it home from the Jets game. I sucked it up, though, and continued to avoid the doctors until the new year.

"Then I went into the hospital and got a massive blood transfusion. It was like: 'How are you alive? How are you moving? Because your hemoglobin levels are so low.'"

Kosar became sick again while traveling to the Super Bowl in Las Vegas and was hospitalized for several days. □



Former Cleveland Browns quarterback Bernie Kosar gives a high-five before an NFL football game between the Cleveland Browns and the Baltimore Ravens, Sunday, Oct. 7, 2018, in Cleveland.

Associated Press

England reaches European Championship final by beating Netherlands 2-1 on Watkins late goal

By **STEVE DOUGLAS**

AP Sports Writer

DORTMUND, Germany (AP) —

England reached a second straight European Championship final by beating the Netherlands 2-1 thanks to substitute Ollie Watkins' stoppage-time winner on Wednesday.

Watkins, who came on for captain Harry Kane in a bold call by coach Gareth Southgate, turned and smashed a fierce shot into the bottom corner in the first minute of added-on time.

England will play Lamine Yamal and Spain in Sunday's final in Berlin. It will be the

nation's first title match on foreign soil, having won the World Cup in 1966 and lost to Italy in the Euro 2020 final both times at Wembley Stadium.

In an open first half, Harry Kane's 18th-minute penalty canceled out Xavi Simons' brilliantly struck opener for the Dutch in the seventh minute.

Watkins had only made one previous appearance at Euro 2024 as a substitute in the group game against Denmark so it was a surprise when he was introduced by Southgate in England's biggest match so far.



England's Ollie Watkins, center, celebrates after scoring his sides second goal past Netherlands goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen during a semifinal match between the Netherlands and England at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Dortmund, Germany, Wednesday, July 10, 2024.

Associated Press



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"Unbelievable I've been waiting for that moment for weeks," said Watkins, the Aston Villa striker who was the fourth top scorer in the Premier League last season. "It's taken a lot of hard work to get to where I am today. I got the opportunity and took it with both hands."

That the goal was set up by Cole Palmer, another substitute, will have pleased Southgate, too.

"I said to (Palmer), 'We're going to come on and you're going to set me up,'" Watkins said. "I knew, as soon as he got the ball, he was going to play me in. When it went in the bottom corner, it was the best feeling ever."

The sea of orange in the giant South Stand at Westfalenstadion fell silent. It housed the most vocal of the Dutch supporters who dominated the city center before marching in their thousands to the stadium ahead of the game. Police reported three separate clashes between fans from both countries in the city. It gave the occasion the feeling of a home match for the Dutch and England, which came from behind to advance in the last 16 and quarterfinals, was up against it even more after the 21-year-old Simons became the second youngest scorer for the Netherlands at a Euros. □